

**Security Council**

Sixty-third year

*Provisional***6031**st meeting

Thursday, 4 December 2008, 10 a.m.

New York

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Jurica	(Croatia)
<i>Members:</i>	Belgium	Mr. Belle
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Tiendrébéogo
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Costa Rica	Mr. Weisleder
	France	Mr. Lacroix
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Terzi di Sant'Agata
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Dabbashi
	Panama	Mr. Suescum
	Russian Federation	Mr. Dolgov
	South Africa	Mr. Kumalo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	United States of America	Mr. Wolff
	Viet Nam	Mr. Bui The Giang

Agenda

Security Council mission

Briefing by the Head of the Security Council mission to Afghanistan

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.



The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council mission

Briefing by the Head of the Security Council mission to Afghanistan

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Afghanistan, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Ayooob (Afghanistan) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2008/708, which contains the text of a letter dated 14 November 2008 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General.

At this meeting, the Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Giulio Terzi di Sant'Agata, head of the Security Council mission to Afghanistan and Permanent Representative of Italy.

I would like to welcome the return of the members of the Council and the Secretariat who took part in the mission to Afghanistan.

I now give the floor to Mr. Giulio Terzi di Sant'Agata, head of the Security Council mission to Afghanistan.

Mr. Terzi di Sant'Agata (Italy): The Security Council travelled to Afghanistan from 21 to 28 November, guided by the agreed terms of reference that were recently circulated as an official document of

the Council. I believe that the mission achieved its main goal of developing a first-hand assessment of the situation in the country at a critical juncture. I am convinced that future Council deliberations on Afghanistan will be better informed as a result of this first-hand fact-finding mission.

I wish to thank all colleagues who participated in the mission for their outstanding contributions to our discussions in Afghanistan. I also wish to thank Ambassador Zahir Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, for his kindness in accompanying the mission and his effectiveness in facilitating the meetings with the Afghan authorities. Obviously, it would have been impossible to undertake this visit under challenging conditions without the flawless organization carried out by the Secretariat and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), as well as the highly professional logistical and security support provided by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). I would also like to thank Ambassador Haroon, Permanent Representative of Pakistan; Ambassador Al-Jarman, Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates; Ambassador Al-Murad, Permanent Representative of Kuwait; and Ambassador Al-Nasser, Permanent Representative of Qatar. Through the efforts of their countries' respective authorities, they provided us with very valuable assistance in our travels.

In Kabul, the mission met with President Karzai and a number of his ministers; the speakers of the upper and lower houses of Parliament; chairmen of parliamentary committees and other members of parliament; the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and the Independent Electoral Commission; the Secretary-General of NATO, its Senior Civilian Representative in Kabul and representatives of ISAF; members of the diplomatic community, including the European Union troika and the head of the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan; civil society organizations; national and international non-governmental organizations; UNAMA senior staff and the United Nations country team. The mission was followed attentively by the Afghan media and public opinion.

We also visited Herat, where we met with the regional office of UNAMA, the Provincial Governor, other Afghan officials and the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). In Herat, the mission noted that the activities of the Provincial Reconstruction Team were

well received by provincial leaders and public opinion. The Governor and members of the provincial council underlined the importance of the quick-impact assistance projects implemented by the Herat PRT.

While the mission report is being prepared, I would like to anticipate a few findings on the basis of the messages that we emphasized during our final press conference. First, we should like to echo Foreign Minister Spantâ's statement that Afghanistan is facing a difficult security situation, but not a security crisis. That assessment is based on the acknowledgement that the insurgency is concentrated in specific regions and does not offer any alternative model of Government, despite the illusion it creates that it is omnipresent.

At the same time, it is obvious that Afghanistan is faced with daunting and multifaceted challenges. In addressing those problems, it is important to avoid any inclination towards frustration or, worse, any inconclusive discussions between Afghanistan and its friends within the international community. Rather, we should redouble our joint efforts in a spirit of partnership.

There are important areas of progress that invite a sense of cautious optimism for the future: the improvement in relations with Pakistan, which was emphasized by President Karzai and Minister Spantâ; the recent cabinet appointments, which seem to have created increased energy, for example, in the fight against corruption; the significant reduction — 19 per cent — in the area of opium cultivation, reported by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; the commitment to improve subnational governance, including the launching of the Afghanistan Social Outreach Programme; and the registration of nearly 2 million Afghans during the first two phases of the voter registration project without any major security incidents. Those gains must be built upon, especially in the year to come.

The "Afghanization" of the security sector and the operational improvement of the Afghan National Security Forces are crucial components of the stabilization process.

The international actors reiterated their commitment to meeting Afghan requests to accelerate this progress. Thanks to the increased capacity of the Afghan National Army, ISAF-only operations are now rather an exception. On police reform, the new Minister of the Interior, Mr. Hanif Atmar, called for an

increase in the number of mentors and trainers, including at the district level. An enhanced contribution is expected in particular from the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan. Minister Atmar expressed his acknowledgement that the Government needed to create a change in the public perception of the police and improve its accountability.

The impact of the conflict on civilians is of particular concern and was the subject of in-depth discussions during the visit. The vast majority of civilian casualties are caused by the insurgents, who deliberately target civilians as part of their strategy. We were reassured on this occasion by the close attention ISAF pays to avoiding civilian casualties and by recent steps to reduce casualties and provide redress when they do occur.

Free, fair and inclusive elections in 2009 are necessary to renew the legitimacy of the Afghan authorities and to win back the full confidence of the people. The Independent Electoral Commission appeared fully committed to achieving this goal, in accordance with the Afghan Constitution. President Karzai stressed the importance of elections taking place throughout the country.

On the subject of national reconciliation, we noted an increasing consensus among Afghan interlocutors on the concept that any dialogue with anti-Government elements must be conducted by the Afghan authorities from a position of strength and that the renunciation of violence and respect for the Afghan Constitution must constitute the red lines of any negotiation. Negotiations are therefore a complement to the fight against terrorism, not an alternative. The process must lead to democratization and not to an increased influence of Taliban obscurantism on Afghan society.

While many Afghans, including President Karzai, called for discussions to end the violence, none of the mission's interlocutors wanted to see the Taliban return to power. The significant improvement of Afghanistan's relationship with its neighbours was welcomed by the mission. The Security Council has consistently supported an approach that helps to bring security through a regional approach that also supports regional economic development.

The mission also welcomed cooperation between the Afghan Government and its neighbours on specific issues that promote improved border control, such as

counter-narcotics and refugees. It is to be hoped that current regional developments will not affect such positive dynamics. Afghan interlocutors welcomed planned international initiatives to foster cooperation in the region.

In the area of development assistance, the mission was informed of perceived inefficiencies in the delivery of aid. The international community is expected to show more transparency and to better coordinate its efforts, in accordance with the Paris Declaration.

On humanitarian assistance, the mission was briefed on measures being adopted to ensure food security during the winter season. At the same time, concerns were expressed that funding was not in place to provide food aid after March. Donors are therefore encouraged to channel their contributions through the Afghan Government or the World Food Programme.

Given recent trends of increasing intimidation of human rights defenders and the recent reversals relating to impunity and freedom of expression, we encouraged the Afghan authorities to reinvigorate their efforts to uphold human rights, in particular the rights of women and children.

Finally, I would like to put special emphasis on the expressions of strong support for UNAMA's coordination role that we heard throughout our meetings both with international actors and with the Afghan authorities. President Karzai expressed complete satisfaction with the cooperation of Special Representative Kai Eide. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General enjoys the full trust and respect of his partners in Kabul. Consequently, many interlocutors expressed the view that UNAMA should be properly empowered to tap into its own potential. United Nations Member States are therefore urged to provide UNAMA with the financial and human resources needed to live up to its enhanced mandate defined by resolution 1806 (2008).

The President: On behalf of the Council, I should like to express gratitude and appreciation to all of the members of the Security Council mission, which was very ably led by Ambassador Terzi, for the manner in which they discharged their important responsibility on behalf of the Council.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 10.25 a.m.